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ABSTRACT

This document, which is intended to help individual managers and task forces committed to development of a work-family agenda, is based on recommendations of the Work and Family Research Council, which is composed of 35 advocates of work-family policies within U.S. firms. Basic strategies for promoting (marketing) work-family programs within different corporate cultures are reviewed, and ways of linking work-family issues to other corporate concerns are discussed. Four developmental stages in the creation of work and family policies and programs are proposed: getting initial support to investigate work-family problems and possible solutions; developing internal support for specific recommendations and policy options; maintaining support for the continuation of existing work-family policies and programs, and expanding work-family programs to create culture change. The document includes the following: strategies for developing and implementing "marketing plans" for each of the four stages; strategies for connecting work-family programs to other corporate objectives, including quality, managing diversity, gender equity, retention, and career development; and a discussion of the need for ongoing communications. (MN)

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The Conference Board

Report Number 973

Strategies for Promoting a Work-Family Agenda

Work-family champions in more than 40 companies advise on:

- *applying marketing principles to communicate work-family programs*
- *anticipating and overcoming resistance*
- *tailoring efforts to an organization's culture*
- *connecting work-family issues to business concerns*

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Strategies for Promoting a Work-Family Agenda

by Dana E. Friedman and Arlene A. Johnson

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From the President

The changing demographics of the work force—especially the growing number of working mothers, dual-earner couples, and employees with elder care responsibilities—have caused business to focus increased attention on work and family issues. Corporate programs to help employees balance work and family responsibilities have gained acceptance in many organizations, often through the efforts of an individual or group who effectively communicated the benefits of a work-family agenda.

This report draws on the experiences of over 40 work-family pioneers and managers who have successfully advanced work and family initiatives in their organizations. Their experience in communicating and marketing work-family issues can serve to help other companies that are launching work-family initiatives or want to evaluate the appropriateness of programs to their corporate culture.

We are especially grateful to the members of The Conference Board's Work and Family Council for sharing their insights and for making the minutes of their meeting available for this report.

PRESTON TOWNLEY
President and CEO

Executive Summary

Despite the growing recognition of work and family issues in the workplace, every company must go through a process of self-examination and questioning to justify the appropriateness of a response to family needs within its culture. This process of internally "marketing" work and family programs requires creativity and perseverance on the part of advocates. It also requires considerable knowledge about the organization and the relevance of work-family issues to other organizational concerns. One must know who to target and the likely obstacles or resistances to be faced.

This publication highlights the strategies that have worked for others in introducing and sustaining work-family programs in a particular organization. It is intended to help individual managers or task forces committed to the development of a work-family agenda. Strategies are suggested for those at any of four developmental stages in the creation of work and family programs and policies. These stages are:

(1) getting initial support to investigate work-family problems and possible solutions;
(2) developing internal support for specific recommendations and policy options;
(3) maintaining support for the continuation of existing work-family policies and programs; and
(4) expanding work-family programs to create culture change.

Each stage requires a "marketing plan" that will streamline the effort. The plan should identify target audiences, potential objections, and ways of meeting those objections. Recommended strategies for success include involving a broad group of people in the process and connecting work-family issues to a business strategy.

The strategic issues of quality, diversity, gender equity, retention and career development have points of natural linkage that can be used to leverage support for work-family efforts. For example, total quality efforts and programs for managing diversity have a natural synergy with work-family initiatives because of their emphasis on maximizing each individual's workplace contribution.

Promoting a work-family agenda is an ongoing process that requires the support of continual communication and feedback. Packaging the work-family message, customizing communication for different target audiences, and involving employees all contribute to the long-term success of a work-family agenda.

Method

This report had its genesis in a meeting of The Conference Board's Work and Family Research Council held in Boston, October 4-6, 1989, to discuss marketing and mainstreaming work and family programs. The goals of the meeting were to review basic strategies for promoting work-family programs within different corporate cultures and explore ways to link work-family issues to other corporate concerns.

The Work and Family Research Council is composed of 35 "champions" of work-family policies within some of the most progressive firms in the country. Their collective experience marketing and mainstreaming work and family programs is unparalleled in the country. While Council meetings are typically off-the-record, it was felt that the discussions at this meeting would be particularly beneficial to others trying to promote a work-family agenda within their company. This report is the first public presentation of the Council's deliberations.

Additional information was gathered at presentations and workshops on marketing work-family issues presented at a Child Care, Inc. seminar, June 1990, and two Board conferences: Employee Benefits, February 1991, and Mainstreaming the Work-Family Agenda, April 1991. Case study material came from structured interviews with Work and Family Council members as well as several work-family managers in companies not represented on the Council.

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Marketing Work-Family Issues

Throughout the various stages of planning, implementing and sustaining work and family programs, a variety of individuals or groups may take a leadership role. The lead should be taken by whomever is most effective in galvanizing support and amassing needed resources to get the job done. Since work-family issues are often "political," in that they evoke personal values and strongly held opinions, the work-family "champion" must be selected carefully and may need to change as the process unfolds. The political climate for acceptance or the particular option being proposed may alter, and a new stakeholder would be more effective in securing needed support.

Once an individual or group raises the subject, a more formal effort may evolve that requires the formal creation of a group that will manage the investigation and the development of recommendations. Most larger companies develop a task force on work and family made up of the "interested and the powerful." There needs to be a commitment from those participating, but it is important to include those who are in a position to influence more senior people from whom approval will be necessary down the road. Even "doubting Thomases" are useful on the committee as a way to gauge resistance and better understand those who may pose obstacles to the recommended outcomes.[1]

Individual employees might want to take on the responsibility of investigating work and family issues, but they may need permission to spend work time on the project. They may not feel secure proposing the idea and want to enlist coworkers in the process. They may be part of a formal group, such as a Women's Committee or parent support group, that could jointly pursue a work-family initiative. To the degree that company time or resources will be needed, a non-management employee or group will need to involve higher levels of management at an early stage of the process.

[1] For a detailed discussion on forming work-family task forces, see Dana E. Friedman, *Family-Supportive Policies: The Corporate Decision-Making Process*, The Conference Board, Report No. 897, 1987.

Until recently, The Conference Board's Work and Family Center received calls from human resource managers who requested that information on work and family programs be sent to their home address, lest anyone at the office think they were proposing something "radical." Today, championing work-family issues may be a stepping stone to greater exposure in the organization and more access to senior decision makers. In years past at Kodak, having responsibility for work-family programs was seen as a negative. Now many people want the responsibility; the position entails a great deal of visibility with corporate and business unit management.

In the early stages of a work-family effort, responsibility for promoting programs is usually not a part of anyone's job description. Most companies find that it is necessary at the beginning to have a "champion" to promote the process of researching and implementing policies. As the issues gain credibility and support, a company may designate a "work-family manager" to be responsible for coordinating all of the company's work-family needs assessment, policy development and programs. In addition to developing and implementing programs, the job also entails promoting the need for work-family programs to internal management and employee audiences and articulating the business rationale for a work-family emphasis.

At Bank of America, the champion now has the title of vice president and manager of Work-Family Programs. In the mid-'80s, a highly visible effort of the company's foundation—a program called the California Child Care Initiative Project—was a success and the champion got credit for it. A broader role was sought as a career decision for the champion and a strategic decision for the organization. Now the trust is evident in the amount of latitude given to this new role as policy and program developer, internal champion and external spokesperson.

Applying Principles of Marketing

According to successful work-family advocates, the process of promoting work-family issues can be

compared with the challenge of marketing a new product.[2] As for any new product or idea, one needs a "marketing plan" to:

- identify target audiences and segment those audiences in terms of their different needs;
- establish a positioning strategy that expresses work-family programs in terms of benefits to target audiences and the organization;
- outline a staged or sequential approach for focusing on different audiences and objectives;
- anticipate objections that will be raised and develop tactics to meet those objections;
- assess competing issues or products that may pull away needed resources and attention; and
- specify means for rewarding and communicating positive feedback to those who "buy the product."

A helpful first step in developing a marketing plan is to create an organization chart that maps out current levels of work-family commitment within the organization. Completing an organization assessment (such as Exhibit 1) will enable any individual or group to determine just how much work lies ahead and how to segment efforts to different target audiences within the organization.

After completing the assessment exercise, asking the following questions may help in the design of a strategy:

- What has influenced the commitment or lack of commitment to work-family programs thus far? Are these influences still at work? Are the past patterns likely to continue?
- To what degree is the commitment dispersed or centralized in the organization? Is it personalized or institutionalized?
- What important facts about work-family commitment in the organization are not reflected in the diagram?

When 30 member companies of the Work and Family Research Council completed this exercise, there were very different results for each organization. One noticeable trend was that even where the CEO was very aware and committed to the issues, there was no guarantee that mid-level managerial commitment followed. Even within organizations that had successfully implemented a range of work-family policies, there were a fair number of departments that remained indifferent or hostile to the subject. This observation would confirm the need for continuous and ongoing "marketing" of work-family programs even after the implementation of a work-family agenda.

Segmented and secondary markets are well recognized in traditional marketing strategies. Murray Gross, president of Market Horizons Inc., a subsidiary of Grey Advertising, Inc., demonstrated this to a corporate audience through the marketing strategy for Kool-Aid. It would seem that the most effective sales strategy is to convince children to drink Kool-Aid. However, the gatekeeper for purchasing is the mother. The marketing strategy must appeal to *both* children and mothers, with a different message for each.

In many companies, the decision maker on work-family issues is the CEO. The gatekeeper, however, may be the director of human resources or the corporate attorney who may, for example, be concerned with liability. The CEO and the gatekeeper must both be convinced, but different strategies need to prevail.

What is the Impetus for a Company Commitment to Work-Family Issues?

The impetus for responding to work-family issues may come from a variety of organizational, personal or external sources. At AT&T, for instance, the primary motivation for movement on work-family was labor bargaining. For a number of years, various employee groups had expressed a need for support in balancing work life and family life. This interest took the form of grass roots activities that surfaced in union as well as management discussions. Hard data and the philosophical directions from a new CEO brought the issues to a head. Reinforcement was coming from a noticeable difficulty in hiring. In 1988 an internal study on the cost of turnover indicated that family pressures cause turnover.

At Bank of America, the issue bubbled up from employees. Several branches conducted unauthorized surveys, and the company's foundation was concerned with responding to community needs. At American Express, employees, including women in management, began to express family concerns. The Hudson Institute's *Workforce 2000* was very influential in bringing the business issues home to managers.

A different scenario existed at Kodak. While Kodak is basically a family-supportive company, there was resistance to becoming too involved in the family lives of employees. Implementation of some early programs, such as the Dependent Care Assistance Plan and ad hoc flexible working arrangements, were among the first indications that family needs could be accommodated. Additionally, campus recruiters for Kodak reported an increase in the number of questions about the company's work/family policies. Over the past four years, a number of programs, including family leave,

[2] This analysis of marketing principles as applied to work-family issues was suggested by the following presentations: Margaret Coughlin of Engles, Quinn & Johnson to The Conference Board's Work and Family Council, October 4, 1989, and Murray W. Gross, Market Horizons, Inc., a subsidiary of Grey Advertising Inc. to a Child Care Inc. seminar on June 5, 1990.

Exhibit 1

Assessing Work-Family Commitment in Your Organization

Objectives: To assess the status of work-family commitment in your organization; to identify marketing priorities.

Your Name: _____ **Organization:** _____

- ☐ Board of Directors
- ☐ Chief Executive Officer
- ☐ Chief Financial Officer
- ☐ Pres./CEO of Subsidiary or Operating Cos.
- ☐ Division Senior Management
- ☐ Legal
- ☐ Accounting
- ☐ Tax Department
- ☐ HR – Senior Managers
- ☐ HR – Staff

ME

- ☐ Placement/Recruitment
- ☐ Community/Public Affairs
- ☐ Marketing Management
- ☐ Benefits Officers (EAP)
- ☐ Labor Relations Office
- ☐ Work-Family Task Force
Minority Advisory Group
Women's Advisory Group
- ☐ First Line Supervisors – All Functions
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

You are represented by the middle circle. The boxes on the left and right represent key people and functions in your organization.

1. *"Personalize" the diagram.* Review the lines on the left and right to make sure they include all the categories of people/functions that you feel are important to the process of initiating, authorizing and implementing work-family programs in your organization. Add categories, if necessary, beside the unlabelled boxes. (You may modify categories to suit your organization, and you may cross out any box that is not applicable to your organization.)

2. *Diagram the relationship you have with the people/function in each of the boxes.*

- Draw a Heavy Line to the box(es) identifying people/functions with whom you have direct contact.
- Draw a Dotted Line to the box(es) identifying people/functions with whom you have little or no direct contact.

3. *Categorize the level of work-family commitment of each of the people and functions identified.* Color the boxes as follows:

- ■ Aware of the business impact of work-family issues and committed to action.
- ☐ Somewhat aware of work-family issues, but don't regard them as business priorities.
- ☐ Indifferent or unaware of work-family as a business issue.
- ■ Hostile or skeptical as regards work-family issues.

4. *Diagram the direction of work-family commitment.* On each of the dotted or heavy lines, indicate with arrows the direction in which work-family commitment flows. If it goes in both directions, indicate that.

Possible Objections to Creating a Work-Family Agenda

Personal Attitudes and Experience

Discomfort with discussing personal problems at work.
No personal experience with working wives.
"If women want careers, they shouldn't have children."
"I never had these supports, why should others?"
"I neglected my family, why can't others?"
"The country would be better off with mothers at home."
"The type of people who need help are wimps."
"I pay you well; you solve your own problems."

Habit

Decisions made on a short-term, reactive basis, not on long-range, proactive basis.
Discomfort with the "grayness" that goes along with work and family issues.
Managers not assessed on managing people.
Belief that the total hours one puts in equals their contribution to the organization.
A "good ol' boy" atmosphere.
Management practices and organization design based on control.
Attention to non-business issues means people aren't serious.
"What about head count?"
"These programs only make sense for good performers."
"There are no processes here to change the culture."
"We could never get the company to agree."
"We already have terrific policies."
"Relocation is the only way to broaden experience."
"The company can't solve all these problems alone, so why start?"
"No initiatives will fit with shift work."

Fears and What Ifs

"If I provide help to some people, everyone will want it, or something else of equal value."
Liability concerns.
"These programs will only cause work disruptions."
Negative anticipation: "They probably won't work anyway."
"We tried it once and it didn't work."
"These policies are bad for the company because they will encourage weak people to stay."
"These policies will lead to a feeling of entitlement."
"If we treat people differently, there will be law suits."
"If you give employees an inch, they'll take a mile."

There's No Proof

Difficulty in quantifying the benefits of these programs.
"It's not a business issue."
"It's only speculative that it can help the bottom line."
"I don't see the evidence of the impact of dual careers."
"What's the value added?"

Ignorance and the Ostrich Phenomenon

"We can't help because we can't have an on-site child care center."
"We don't know how to respond, so why look at change?"
"We should just look for more 'uncomplicated' people to hire."
"Community programs are the answer."
"It may be a problem for others, but not in my department."
"We just can't do these things here."
"I thought government was supposed to take care of this."
"We have no time to think about it."
"This is just a problem for the EAP."
"There are no consultants or external resources to help us."
"We did a survey; it didn't show a need."
"This too shall pass."

Politics

Issue is caught in a political crossfire.
Political standing of the message bearer is low or inappropriate.
"There's too much territoriality to get anything done here."
"This is just a women's issue."
"We keep killing things by committee."

Competition

"We do not want to be a leader or be first."
"The competition built a day care center three years ago and they are less profitable now."
"None of our competitors is doing anything."
"The Japanese don't do it."

Timing

"The timing is not right; come back later."
"With serious downsizing, we need to be lean and mean."
"We just got a bad financial report."
"We have union problems now."

This list was generated by The Conference Board's Work and Family Council, based on members' experiences in championing work-family programs in their own organizations.

national child care resource and referral, and a formal alternative work schedule policy, have been implemented.

Many companies report that positive press coverage can provide positive feedback to decision makers. Media attention to a successful or innovative program often reinforces existing programs and provides more impetus for change.

Knowing the Obstacles

Any strategy will be more effective when the obstacles posed by various individuals or groups are anticipated. To help assess the nature of resistance within an organization, the Research Council listed the objections they have encountered in their push for a more family-supportive workplace (see box).

The obstacles fall into several categories. They relate to the personal attitudes and experiences of the decision maker; the habits of the organization (e.g., comfort with the way things have always been done); fears about possible effects of work-family pursuits; the desire for data; ignorance of the problem; politics; competition; and timing. To the extent possible, one should assess whether these beliefs, attitudes, or conditions prevail within the work environment.

Designing a Strategy

Depending on what stage of work-family programming the company has reached, there are specific strategies that can be useful to fitting the issues into the company culture. Work and Family Council members suggest marketing strategies for four different phases of program development, from a beginning stage where support for a work-family task force is sought, to an advanced stage where the hope might be to change the culture.

Getting Started

Often the first step is gaining permission to study the issues, gather information, or form a work-family task force. In some organizations, task forces are commonly used to solve problems. The idea of a task force might not be resisted, but its focus on work-family might be questioned.

One way to engender support for the task force is to include diverse stakeholders and opinion leaders. A high level champion could serve as its chair. The group must create a vision, but concentrate on individual issues that can be readily understood and leveraged. The issues should be tied to a business strategy.

It may be advisable not to design the effort to solve a problem, but rather to become part of an overall effort to improve productivity. This would help underscore the value of the work-family task force to the organization and the company's commitment to a supportive work environment.

Identify potential roadblocks and ways to get around them. Beware that some obstacles are smokescreens and only the real ones should be attacked. It would be helpful to know what competitors or other local firms have done.

The group should define objectives and deliverables well, and use them later to evaluate effectiveness. If the effort fails, try the same message, but have a different person leading, or a different message with the same person in a leadership role.

Phase One: Establishing or Enhancing a Policy

As a first step, a company might implement or revise a policy—for example, maternity leave. The experiences of other companies may be the most helpful in determining an appropriate new policy. Make sure to understand what problems they anticipated and which actually occurred. What successes do they boast of? Another driving force may be the state legislature which may be considering a mandate on the issue of maternity leave.

Look for examples in the company of how maternity benefits have been used thus far. Use testimonials and anecdotes to demonstrate ways in which attitudes and productivity have been improved as a result. For instance, Kodak let it be known that the number of people leaving after childbirth was reduced from 50 percent to 10 percent, after the change in the maternity policy. It is important to first determine who must be convinced to get the program through, and develop a coherent marketing strategy. Talk to line managers when looking for allies.

Focus on packaging a set of responses to the issue. This will avoid fragmentation of programming and enable you to keep the full vision in view. Make sure to build in an evaluation component.

Phase Two: Expanding the Program

At this stage, several good work-family programs are in place, but they need to be expanded and made more comprehensive. It would have been helpful to prime the pump by proposing a three-year plan initially and warning management that expansion might be warranted. This would reduce surprises. As part of an evolving process, it is still important to base the next move on readiness. Allow the success of earlier programs to build up and the effects to sink in. The success stories should be widely publicized.

Consider whether the context for current programs has changed. There may be a need for more basic research. This can be tested through climate surveys or an examination of candidate or exit interviews.

Start involving more and different people than were involved in the development of the last effort. Communication throughout the organization is critical. As more employees might benefit from the broadened work-family program, it is important to emphasize the difference between equity and equality—no singular policy can address the needs of a diverse work force. The need is for a broad range of policies that do not necessarily provide everyone with the same benefits, but with the same value in their benefits.

Phase Three: Culture Change

With a comprehensive work-family program in place, it is now time to introduce supervisory training to develop a more family-supportive corporate culture. The most important step is to get full senior management support. Emphasize the importance of flexibility which by definition gives more discretion to managers who need help in their new management role.

Managers have to see a payoff before they will cooperate. Build diversity objectives into managers' business objectives. Reward positive behaviors through performance evaluations and bonuses. At every opportunity, generate and circulate positive press. Throughout the entire process of planning and implementation, communicate with managers and employees to avoid misinformation and promote success.

The experience of other companies and an objective look from outside consultants might help avoid mistakes.

Summary

Throughout all four stages of creating work and family programs, there is a consistent set of strategies that are recommended for success:

- Have a respected champion
- Involve a broad group of people in the process
- Identify allies and antagonists
- Gather hard data and supporting information
- Know what competitors are doing
- Define business objectives and connect work-family issues to a business strategy
- Create a vision, but work incrementally
- Consider both the short- and long-term implications of what is being proposed
- Communicate continually
- Provide feedback on success

At every stage, the "tone" of the strategy will depend on the level of resistance and the style of the champion. Some of those who have been through the process feel that "guerrilla tactics" are absolutely necessary to get work-family issues heard. Other experienced leaders feel it is more important to be straightforward and put the issues on the table simply and clearly.

Another consideration is whether one uses an economic justification or one of corporate social responsibility. For some, it need not be an either/or question—both strategies apply. Knowing the rationale for various commitments in the organization may help reveal whether the moralistic high road is more appropriate. Even if asserting that work-family issues are the "right" thing to do, the relevance of work-family issues to business objectives must be clearly stated.

Connecting Work-Family Programs to Other Corporate Objectives

If work-family concerns are viewed as separate or standalone issues, they may lose out in the competition for management attention and resources. Therefore, it is wise to make use of the natural linkages between the work-family agenda and other strategic issues of the organization such as quality, managing diversity, gender equity, retention and career development. Making these connections explicit can strengthen the perception of work-family as central to business objectives and pull the work-family agenda into what are already mainstream business efforts. As one work-family strategist explains: "Most people can only have one primary focus. If you can link your objectives to that primary focus, the opportunity for impact goes way up."

The following section explores the connection between work-family issues and five specific corporate objectives. Case examples illustrate how some companies have capitalized on linkages with other issues to establish, communicate, or advance work-family goals.

Quality

The total quality movement of the past decade has put the issue of quality at the center of business concerns and shifted responsibility for quality from the shop floor to virtually every corporate function. The growth of the quality movement offers an opportunity to expand work-family awareness since many of the tenets and principles of total quality management coincide with the organization change objectives of the work-family agenda (see box). Linking work-family concerns to a company's quality efforts can enhance

Making the Connection with Total Quality

Concepts of total quality management can be used to market and communicate central themes of the work-family agenda. Quality directors and work-family champions point to five principles of the quality movement that are natural leverage points for work-family programs.

Concept of the internal customer: The quality process provides the recognition that employees are internal customers. In order to satisfy external customers, internal customers must have what they need to be effective employees. This means having systems in place to identify and meet the needs of the employee customer group.

Continuous improvement: Quality is not an outcome but a process. The concept of continuous improvement argues against quick fixes or single focus programs. It demands continual monitoring, reassessment and change to improve and meet changing customer needs. A dependent care program might begin with preschool referrals, but continual monitoring of customer requirements would pick up on school-age child care needs and emerging elder care problems.

Importance of the individual: The performance of the company is a function of the performance of employees. For the individual to perform in an exceptional manner requires developing the individual's full potential—professionally through training, teamwork and involvement, and personally through a full and balanced life.

Expanded concept of productivity: Rather than evaluating each process in terms of input, output and cost per unit, quality management takes a more holistic view and assesses effectiveness in meeting customer needs. The payback on quality management—and work-family programs—cannot be micro-measured. Programs need to be evaluated for their total effect on meeting customer needs.

Values and culture change: Pursuing quality requires that an organization and its members assess the basic values and business processes that underlie customer relationships, advancement and reward systems, and management styles. Achieving quality—or helping employees achieve work-family balance—requires continual leadership from the top and culture change that alters the way business is done.

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awareness of work-family concerns or strengthen already-existing initiatives.

Corning. The systems that CEO James Houghton put in place to improve quality also provided work-family issues with a context and problem-solving process. As a way of involving employees in the quality process, Houghton established a number of employee Quality Improvement Teams (QITs) for promoting long-term change and Corrective Actions Teams (CATs) for addressing specific problems. One CAT, charged with identifying the internal customer needs of Corning's women employees, brought work-family issues to the forefront and made the case for a comprehensive set of initiatives and policy changes. Today, a number of work-family CATs, a QIT, and an internal work-family consultant work together to continually improve the company's work-family efforts and to integrate them with the company's objectives in quality and diversity.

Corning's director of quality management observes that the quality effort made all the difference in how the company perceives work-family issues. "We had tried work-family programs before, but they just didn't stick. The effort wasn't sustained. They were perceived as 'programs du jour.' In pursuing quality we learned that work-family efforts can't be just programmatic. They have to involve culture change over the long term."

The quality tenet of continuous improvement by helping each employee reach full potential forms the rationale for many of Corning's work-family programs. All work-family initiatives start by asking what employees need to be more productive; they then meet those requirements; and ultimately they evaluate the program in hopes of further increasing productivity. The work-family internal consultant explains, "It makes my job easier, because people know that the programs are based on asking people 'What can I do to help you be a better employee?'"

Referring to the quality model also helps market new programs. For example, a program to train community child care providers gained management support because it was consistent with the company's commitment to training and continuous improvement. Recalling her presentation to Corning management, the program's designer said, "I didn't expect management to have an in-depth understanding of the child care profession or problems of turnover and isolation among child care providers, but when I referred to the relationship of quality to constant learning, they said, 'of course.'"

IDS Financial Services. At IDS an already well-established work-family agenda has been strengthened and brought into the mainstream by the company's recently launched quality initiative. In the mid-'80s, because of the people and service orientation of the company, work-family programs became part of the IDS business strategy to retain and attract a high-quality work force. According to the director of human resources, when a "best place to work" quality program was begun in the late-'80s, work-family efforts did not change direction; but, "The focus on quality intensified work-family initiatives and they became more integral to what goes on in the organization. Today, work and family programs aren't viewed as an exception or experiment. They're just part of the way we work."

The integration of quality and work-family has broadened the rationale for some IDS work-family programs. The company's diverse alternative work schedules began in response to perceived work-family needs. However, when the company's quality program forced managers to reexamine client needs, flexible scheduling and staffing emerged as ways to serve the varied and cyclical needs of clients. As a result, support for flexibility has increased. One of the company's work-family champions observes, "The total quality program helped people see what they might not have seen in a totally 'work-family' context."

Managing Diversity

As the composition of the work force becomes more diverse, companies are recognizing that they must challenge attitudes, practices and management styles that get in the way of developing each employee's potential to the fullest. There is a growing interest in skills of diversity management. While many companies provide training on managing diversity, far fewer have linked diversity efforts with work and family issues. The management skills required to deal with diversity and family needs are similar and it makes sense to link them in the minds of managers (see box).

Diversity and Work-Family: A Natural Synergy

Three central themes of corporate diversity programs reinforce work-family goals.[1]

1. A business focus on diversity challenges the "one-size-fits-all" style of management. It expands the definition of equitable treatment from doing the *same* thing for everyone to doing *something* for everyone. Differences—whether in work style, culture, family type, or gender—are positioned as sources of advantage, not management problems or deviations from the norm.

2. Understanding the implications of diversity reinforces the need for a flexible and systemic, rather than purely programmatic, approach. The range of diversity in the workplace prohibits developing separate policies and procedures for each situation. Managers must learn to implement broadly stated policies in a flexible manner as diverse situations require.

3. Like work-family programs, the ultimate goal of diversity efforts is organizational change to enable all employees to make their best contribution to the organization.

[1] For a further discussion of these themes, see Joel M. DeLuca and Robert N. McDowell, "Managing Diversity: A Strategic 'Grass Roots' Approach," Susan Jackson, ed., *Working Through Diversity: Human Resources Initiatives*, Guilford Press, to be published winter 1992.

Hershey Foods, Procter & Gamble, and Du Pont are among the corporations that have linked diversity and work-family initiatives under the same organizational umbrella.

Continental Insurance. A "Workforce 2000" study and subsequent diversity program provided the work-family champion at Continental Insurance with the opportunity to revitalize interest in the company's work-family programs. Starting in the mid-'80s, home office dependent care and family service programs had enjoyed the support of senior management. However, there was not sufficient momentum behind the programs to implement them nationally.

Then, in 1990, the company conducted a study of employee demographics and ran focus groups to assess the management implications of *Workforce 2000* projections. The resulting recommendations on managing diversity, into which work-family programs were woven, had a dramatic effect on managers' awareness. According to Continental's work-family manager, "What management realized is that we couldn't take an arm's length approach. The answer isn't just programs. The study showed that diversity and the work-family dynamic really have to be a concern of management."

Du Pont. Du Pont's 1988 work and family study generated so many recommendations that an organizational base was needed to implement them. The division of "Work Force Partnering" was created to implement work-family recommendations and direct affirmative action programs. Soon, it also became the home for the company's 10-year-old program of diversity training.

At Du Pont, one director oversees both diversity and work-family programs. The rationale here is that both issues are part of the same objective—meeting new needs of a changing work force. The company felt that changes caused by demographics and lifestyle bring needs into the company which must be managed side by side in an integrated manner. Further, CEO Edgar Woolard believes that people cannot realize their full potential if they have to put part of themselves aside when they enter the workplace. Hence, the introduction of the concept of "partnering," or breaking down barriers of attitudes, lifestyle and policy that inhibit people's effectiveness.

Connecting diversity and work-family efforts has benefited both issues. According to the director of work force partnering, the affirmative action and diversity programs gain a new perspective and are revitalized through their connection with work-family. Work-family efforts stay visibly rooted in work force and business issues by virtue of their association with the diversity focus. "The connection with diversity gives us a better chance of looking holistically at all the things in employee's lives that affect their potential. Work-family programs don't get put into the box of being just about women and babies."

For companies that want to create an organizational synergy between work-family and diversity, Du Pont has the following suggestion: Avoid thinking of diversity as only involving race, gender or culture. Take the broadest view possible of diversity; include lifestyle and work styles. An inclusive perspective increases the likelihood of staying in touch with emerging realities crucial to maintaining a competitive work force.

Gender Equity

Over the past 20 years, there has been an enormous commitment to gender equity, as exemplified by public support of women's rights and affirmative action accompanied by a broadening of women's involvement in social, business and athletic activities, as well as young women's heightened career aspirations. The commitment of business stems from labor shortages and the need to make use of the female work force.

Despite the fact that linking gender equity and work-family issues makes sense, it remains problematic. Research that Fran Rodgers, Work and Family Council member, conducted for the Ford Foundation, concludes that women's ambitions are on a collision course with parenting. Gender equity basically means upward mobility, but success for a woman usually occurs only if she does not have children.

Ambivalence about the relationship of motherhood and upward mobility creates a great deal of denial—in the business world, in the women's movement, and for individual women. Women themselves do not usually raise family issues in their quest for upward mobility. The situation presents business with a forked strategy of either lowering the ambitions of women or changing the culture to allow ambition and parenting to coexist.

Companies cannot take full advantage of the labor pool without attention to women's concerns, as well as to the growing number of men who want more time for family. Though the pressures are greater on women, many younger men are also struggling with work-family balance. In fact, the conclusion of research comparing men and women is that work-family conflict is not a women's issue. When men assume family responsibilities traditionally borne by women, they experience the same conflicts as women, personally and professionally.[3]

The goals of gender equity, talent utilization, and work-family balance would all be served by efforts to accommodate parenting and insure that workers who want to slow down for family reasons do not become invisible on the promotion ladder.

Coopers & Lybrand. The dramatic increase of women in professional roles was one of the major influences that made work-family concerns a recognizable

[3] Dana E. Friedman, *Linking Work-Family Issues to the Bottom Line*, The Conference Board, Research Report No. 949, 1991, pp. 20-23.

business issue for Coopers & Lybrand. However, to advance the discussion of work and career issues, the firm has consciously decided not to position work-family balancing as a female issue—because female professionals themselves might resist stressing male-female differences; to avoid impressions of special treatment; and because the firm believes work-family concerns are not fundamentally female issues.

According to the firm's director of human resources planning, "We see work-family as a gender issue only in the respect that it affects both genders. Any successful approach must recognize the issues professional women have made us aware of—but without magnifying gender differences."

To help managers focus on the business implications of work-family issues, the firm is looking at how both men and women respond to work-family policies such as planned time off, flexible work arrangements and dependent care benefits. Communication about work-family programs are linked to diversity management and effective career development—for both women and men. "Women are just one important aspect of the diversity all around us—diversity of markets, products and talent pool," says the human resources planning director. "Managing diversity is a key to achieving our business objectives. That realization is what is pulling work-family concerns into our thinking."

Retention

Concerns about retaining skilled employees can pave the way for the introduction of family initiatives. Internal data collection in organizations with high training costs, specialized or labor-intensive operations, a large female work force, and/or labor shortages, often link work-family programs with reducing the cost of turnover.

U.S. Air Force. Retaining well-trained, quality personnel is critical to the Air Force mission of worldwide readiness. Moreover, the time and cost requirements of military technical and flight training make turnover costly.

Research in the 1980s revealed that up to 90 percent of Air Force couples could be dual-income families in the 1990s. Internal assessments also indicated a strong connection between a member's decision to remain in or leave the service and the family's (especially the spouse's) satisfaction with Air Force life. Spouses' difficulty finding employment and maintaining careers of their own was a major cause of dissatisfaction with Air Force life. This dissatisfaction was compounded by frequent relocations and the organization's unwritten policy to discourage spouses from working, expecting them instead to volunteer their time to supporting Air Force members and their families.

Air Force leadership acknowledged the link between retention and readiness, and established the Air Force Family Matters Office (AFFAM) at the headquarters. They also began to implement Family Support Centers (FSCs) staffed with paid professionals to meet the increasingly diverse needs of families at every Air Force installation. In addition, recognizing that retention interests would be served by supporting spouses' employment and career aspirations, the Air Force enhanced its spouse employment assistance programs through FSCs.

Arthur Andersen and Andersen Consulting. At Andersen it was demographic change and unacceptable turnover rates among professional women that propelled work-family programs from planning to action. Like many other professional firms in the 1980s, Andersen's recruiting reflected the surge of women into the accounting field. Female recruits became 40 percent of each recruiting class, and often they were an even higher percentage of the most talented and high-potential recruits.

Basically an up-or-out organization, the firm invests heavily in developing young associates and counts on retaining the most talented to assure a high level of service to clients. Therefore, the fact that women were leaving the firm faster than men posed a serious, long-term issue for client services. To test anecdotal evidence that women's attrition was work-family related, the firm conducted a nationwide survey in 1987. The findings confirmed that women—as well as men—were having difficulty balancing the demands of career and family. In response to the needs assessment, the firm implemented a range of programs to assist with dependent care and work scheduling demands.

The director of human resource matters explains that by capitalizing on the attrition issue and documenting it, she was able to get support for what had been a latent work-family agenda. "We all recognized a need at a certain level, but it was gathering facts and getting the attrition data that made the difference." The firm is now tracking the effect of its new programs on attrition. Preliminary results are encouraging. In the past year, the spread between women's and men's attrition rates has narrowed by about 20 percent.

Career Development

Lotte Bailyn of the Sloan School of Management at M.I.T. contends that, "Career development as it is currently constituted is dysfunctional." It doesn't meet the needs of organizations or those with work-family conflicts because it was a system designed for the homogeneous work force and stable economic environment of the past.

Career development today is based on a tournament model. Either you win or lose—and if you lose, you are out forever. Advancement in the tournament depends on succession, skill needs and location needs.

Another practice runs counter to needs today. EEO legislation forces management to look at people in groups. Yet the flexibility required today has to be individual. The key is figuring out how to use flexibility without discriminating.

It is important to recognize career development as part of a total system and get at its underlying assumptions. Three constraining assumptions have dictated the procedures of the current career system.

Old Assumptions

- Commitment and loyalty are expressed in time spent at the job.
- Management and evaluation must focus on the input and before-the-fact approval.
- Homogeneity in outlook and values are necessary to produce a good product or get unity of action.

In order for career development to serve organizations today, new facilitating assumptions must replace the old.

New Assumptions Needed

- Career development accounts for family time and work time. Career discontinuity for family time does not equal failure.
- Effective evaluation is based on accountability for results and after-the-fact review.
- Diversity requires more experimentation and self-design in jobs and careers. Innovation and creativity are desirable. Consequences, not habit, define how work is done.

Bailyn concludes that if work-family issues are not integrated into career development, "family people" will become isolated, and gender inequity will increase at a time when organizations are trying to decrease it. If career development is not integrated into work-family initiatives, programs will simply become accommodations that avoid real change.

North Carolina National Bank. In 1985 the CEO became aware that women, who were 50 percent of new professionals, were concerned that the demands of parenting (e.g., leaving at 5:15 every day) might be an obstacle to their career development. A task force on work-family issues identified a need for more data, which in 1986 led to an internal needs assessment. A survey, focus groups and interviews with senior managers illustrated a consensus on keeping valued employees, but split opinions about whether flexibility could work in a fast-paced, competitive environment.

The questions were defined as career planning issues—for example, "How can I have a career here and respond to my family's needs?" Responsibility for developing work-family solutions became a full-time, discrete job within the career development area. The company developed a "select time" alternative work arrangement for professionals, in which the employee and manager work together to structure a less than full-time schedule.

"Select time" arrangements allow caregivers time for family responsibilities while maintaining a meaningful career. Performance, not schedule, determines promotion and pay. Managers have discretion for defining the expected level of performance and output for each select time employee. The bank has found that the variety of select time arrangements requires flexibility and good communication between managers and employees. The payoff has been improved retention of women professionals, creation of more flexible career development options, and evaluations that focus on employee contributions rather than time at the office.

Summary

A major objective of work-family programs—to improve the productivity and quality of the work force—comes through clearly when work-family issues are connected to business objectives. Work-family champions can leverage visibility and acceptance by connecting work-family programs to priority issues such as quality, diversity and retention.

Partnering with other issues and departments may, in time, result in programs losing their work-family identity. For some advocates this is an acceptable and even desirable outcome. "The philosophy may get absorbed in other initiatives," says one corporate veteran of work-family advocacy, "but I expect that and build on it." Others feel that, though work-family efforts can by synergistic with other initiatives, the unique contributions of the work-family perspective should not be merged with general business objectives. In exploring linkages with other departments, it is necessary to determine whether anything would be sacrificed by riding on the coattails of another issue, or whether this strategy offers work-family advocates the greatest leverage for getting their concerns heard.

The Need for Ongoing Communications

Communications about work and family initiatives must be ongoing and therefore well-planned and orchestrated. Formal communications through house organs, specially prepared brochures, and staff meetings can be very effective. Employees need to feel that they are part of the process from the outset. This will help control expectations about where the company is heading. People who feel they are involved in the process are more likely to cooperate, particularly as the program evolves.

At every stage of work and family programming, the message needs to be customized for the specific target audience. What will appeal to one group at a particular stage may not be effective later. Two different groups at the same stage will respond to different messages as well.

Once approval is given by senior management, it is important to applaud their decision. Such reward and recognition is likely to affect their receptivity to subsequent requests. Marketing experts refer to this as the need to "incentivize," or to provide rewards to those who buy your product.

Successful work-family programs are characterized by clear and continuing communication that puts the company's work-family programs in a business context and helps employees understand what options are available to them. As part of a business strategy, they can only achieve their purpose if they are used by all who can benefit from them. Information about the existence of programs, their business rationale, and instructions on how to access them, need to be reinforced and readily available.

Many companies find a user-friendly work-family brochure serves the dual purpose of consolidating work-family policies in one easy reference and legitimizing the policies in the eyes of both employees and managers. Mobil's brochure, for example, contains an overview of the company's programs, what they entail, and who to contact for more information (see Exhibit 2). Interspersed with detailed program descriptions are statements of Mobil's commitment to work and family balance and explanations of the business rationale for providing flexibility and program options for the company's diverse work force. Checklists for employees and supervisors highlight steps for using the programs and also convey the message that effective use of the programs is a joint responsibility shared by employees and supervisors.

Communication with employees can take the form of promotion and advertising. Time Warner has packaged its work-family programs with a logo and a recognizable look that builds top-of-the-mind awareness among management and employees (see Exhibit 3, p. 20). Consistency in the appearance of all work-family communications reinforces a strong identity for the company's work-family initiatives. Flyers, posters, brochures and easy-reference business cards increase employee usage by keeping the program visible.

Follow-up communications are critical to the long-standing success of work-family programs because results may not be apparent in the short-run. The occasional success story, reports of media coverage, or a compliment from the CEO, all contribute to various stakeholders' impressions that work-family initiatives are working and worthy of continued support.

Exhibit 2

Mobil's Work and Family Program at a Glance

PROGRAMS

Component	Provisions	Materials	Contacts
Employee Assistance Program (EAP)	Provides counseling to employees and their families on marital, family, emotional, alcohol, drug abuse or other personal problems, at employee's or dependent's initiation. To be phased in over time.	EAP Brochure Straight Talk Videotape	Medical Department or Employee Relations Advisor
Child Care Resource and Referral Service	Provides information and referrals to help employees and their spouses locate care for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, school-age children.	Child Care Brochure Child Care Video Child Care Handbook Guide to State Child Care Regulations Checklists	Work/Family Directions at a toll-free 800 number or local agency numbers as listed in Child Care Brochure
Elder Care Consultation and Referral Service	Provides counseling, information and referrals to help employees and their spouses clarify elder care needs and identify resources for relatives age 60 or older.	Elder Care Brochure Elder Care Video Elder Care Handbook Checklists	Work/Family Elder Directions at toll-free 800 number or local agency nos. as listed in Elder Care Brochure
Spouse Employment Assistance Program	Provides counseling and other services to help spouses of relocating employees find employment in new location.	Spouse Employment Assistance Brochure	Employee Relations Advisor
Work and Family Seminars	Offer information and advice on family issues including child care, parenting, and elder care. Available at major office locations or as arranged by local management.		Employee Relations Advisor

POLICIES

Component	Provisions	Materials	Contacts
Savings Plan Flexibility	New 2% of base pay company contribution provides flexibility to many employees to apply some or all of this amount to help pay medical plan contributions.	Changing for the Future Brochure	Benefits Advisor
Working Hours	Allows schedule flexibility.	See local policy	Supervisor Employee Relations Advisor
Discretionary Time Off	Grants time off with pay, under exceptional circumstances, for personal and family reasons.	Personal Leaves of Absence Policy	Supervisor Employee Relations Advisor
Dependent Care Leave of Absence	Unpaid personal leave, initially up to 3 months, available after the birth or adoption of a child or to care for a sick or elderly relative.	Personal Leaves of Absence Policy	Supervisor Employee Relations and Benefits Advisors
Dependent Care Reduced Work Week Provision	Allows part-time work, with a minimum of 20 hrs. per week, for an initial period of up to 3 months, following or in place of Dependent Care Leave.	Dependent Care Reduced Work Week Provision	Supervisor Employee Relations and Benefits Advisors
Maternity Leave	Provides salary continuation when a woman is physically disabled by pregnancy. Benefits are provided through Short Term Disablity (STD) and Long Term Disabilty (LTD).	Short Term Disability Benefits Plan Long Term Disabilty Benefits Plan	Supervisor Employee Relations and Benefits Advisors

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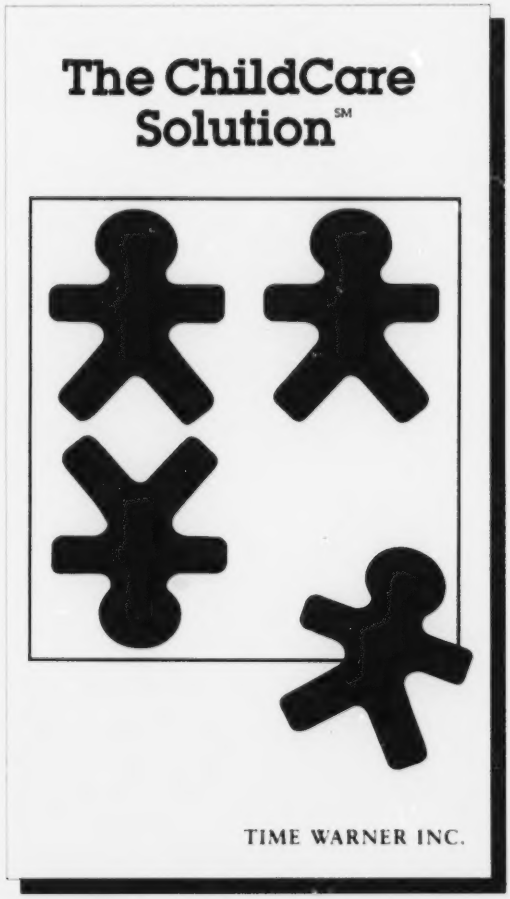
Exhibit 3

How Time Warner Packages Its Work-Family Programs



Related Conference Board Publications

Linking Work-Family Issues to the Bottom Line, Research Report No. 962, 1991

Work and Family Policies: The New Strategic Plan, Research Report, No. 949, 1990

Relocating Two-Earner Couples: What Companies Are Doing, Research Bulletin No. 247, 1989

Flexible Staffing and Scheduling in U.S. Corporations, Research Bulletin No. 240, 1989

A Life Cycle Approach to Family Benefits and Policies, Perspectives No. 19, 1989

The Countdown on Family Leave, Perspectives No. 18, 1989

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